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VOLUME 3

CONCEPTUAL PLANNING

CYPRESS HILLS PROVINCIAL PARK · ALBERTA

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
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CONCEPTUAL PLANNING

CYPRESS HILLS PROVINCIAL PARK · ALBERTA

PROLOGUE

The objectives of this "Resource Inventory, Analysis, and Conceptual Planning Study" of Alberta's Cypress Hills Provincial Park were twofold: (1) to document the diverse resources, land-uses, and facilities of the Park, and (2) to make recommendations for (a) upgrading the Park, emphasizing a nature-oriented and interpretive focus, in line with current Provincial Parks policy, and (b) reconciling current multiple land-use conflicts.

In effecting these objectives large amounts of data were generated and are presented in three separate volumes: Resource Inventory, Analysis, and Conceptual Planning.

Resource Inventory

This volume provides inventories and descriptions of the various physical, biological, and cultural resources of Cypress Hills Provincial Park. Other major topics considered in Volume 1 include facilities, user demand, land ownership and parks policy.

The Resource Inventory document represents the refined data bank used in the analysis and conceptual planning phases of this project. It will serve, in future, as a standard reference on the resources of the Park.

Analysis

The analysis document, Volume 2, represents the conversion of hand mapped inventory data into computer format maps. The digitized data were then used to derive the ecological zones map. The entire park area was analyzed according to suitability for and potential impact of future facilities such as roads, trails, campgrounds and picnic sites. Finally, existing facilities were evaluated according to the two categories of suitability and impact.

Conceptual Planning

Results of the conceptual planning phase of this study are presented in Volume 3. The principal findings of the inventory and analysis phases are summarized and their implications in conceptual planning are evaluated. The most significant "activity zones" of the Park are identified and analyzed in greater depth than in the other volumes. Volume 3 also includes recommendations pertaining to the development of appropriate activities, facilities, and circulation within the context of park policy, and a rational phasing schedule.

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overview

The Study

The objectives of this "Resource Inventory, Analysis, and Conceptual Planning Study" of Cypress Hills Provincial Park (Map 1) were twofold: (1) to document the diverse resources, land-uses, and facilities of the Park, and (2) to make recommendations for (a) upgrading the Park, emphasizing a nature-oriented and interpretive focus (in line with current Provincial Parks policy), and (b) reconciling current multiple-use conflicts.

In effecting these objectives, massive amounts of data were compiled and are presented in two companion volumes:

Volume 1 - Resource Inventory
Volume 2 - Analysis

The Conceptual Plan for the Park evolves from these supporting volumes thus warranting a brief summary here of their essential interrelationship. The content of Volumes 1 and 2 is outlined in Table 1.

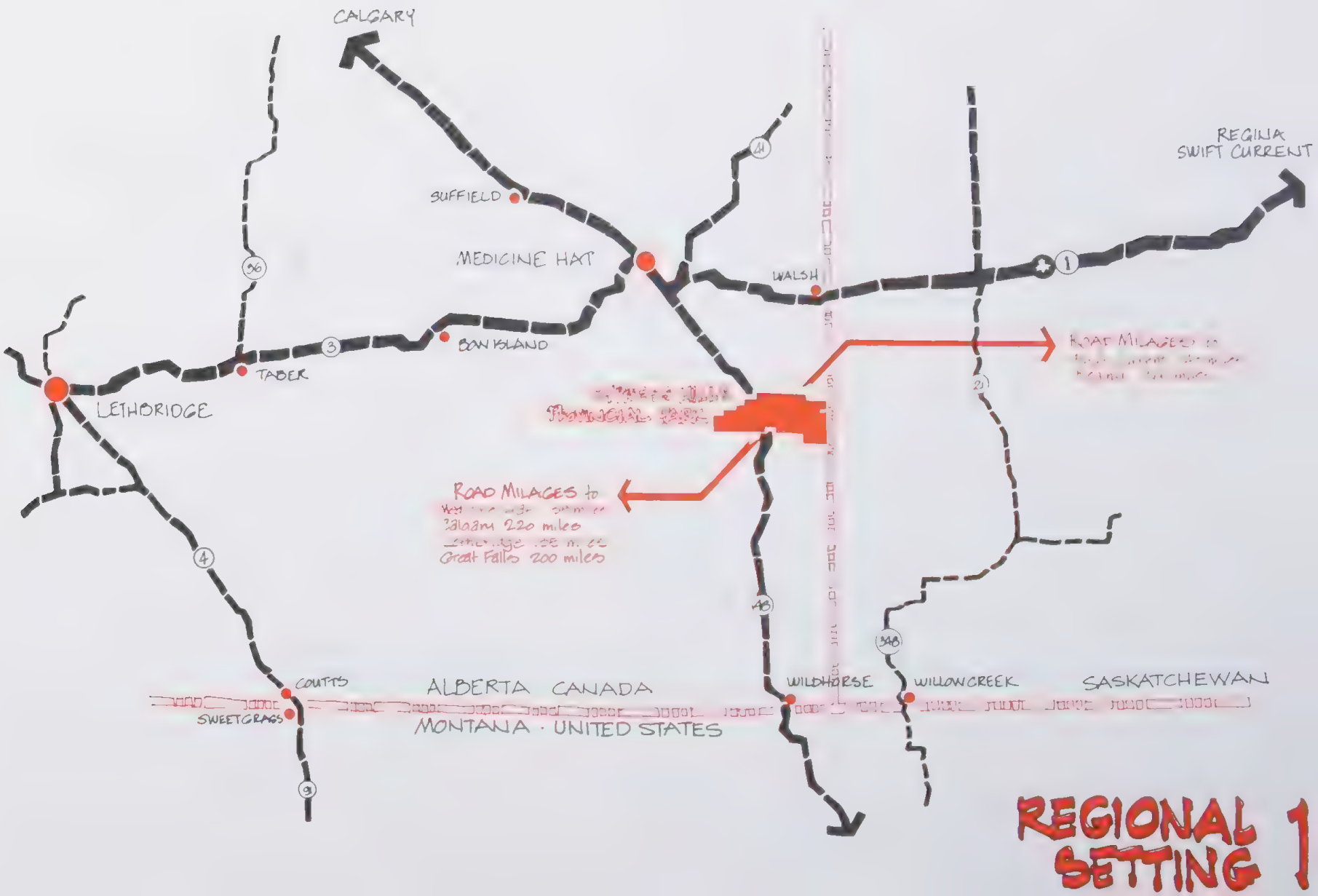
The Resource Inventory is a compilation of available data on the Park (supplemented by considerable field work), with the various categories indicated in Table 1; the inventory maps - over 40 - provided the basic information for the data bank utilized in the Analysis.

The Analysis focused on three broad categories: (1) Ecological Zoning to determine the relative value of watershed units within the Park thus providing an ecologically sound basis for defining major activity zones, (2) Suitability Evaluation to assess facility and activity siting from an engineering and maintenance point-of-view, and (3) Impact Evaluation to assess

TABLE 1

SUMMARY OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (VOLUMES 1 & 2)

Volume 1 - Resource Inventory	Volume 2 - Analysis
- Physical Resources	- Inventory Map Data
Topography	Physical Resources
Geology	Biological Resources
Hydrology	Cultural Resources
Climate	Facilities
- Biological Resources	- Ecological Zoning
Vegetation	Diversity
Soils	Ecological Uniqueness
Wildlife	Undisturbed Character
- Cultural Resources	- Suitability (Engineering) Evaluation
Archaeology/History	
Visual Assets	- Impact (Environmental) Evaluation
- Facilities	
Transportation	Hard Surface Roads
Recreation	Gravel Roads
Townsite	Earth Roads
Services	Surfaced Trails
- User Data	Unsurfaced Trails
	Backpack Camping
- Land Ownership	Walk-in Camping
	Unserviced Camping
- Parks Policy	Semi-serviced Camping
	Fully Serviced Camping
	Serviced Picnic Sites
	Unserviced Picnic Sites
	Present Park Facilities


CALGARY
SUFFIELD
MEDICINE HAT
WALSH
REGINA
SWIFT CURRENT
LETHBRIDGE
TABER
BOW ISLAND
ROAD MILAGES to
Billings 220 miles
Great Falls 200 miles
COUTTS
SWEETGRASS
ALBERTA CANADA
MONTANA · UNITED STATES
WILDHORSE
WILLOW CREEK
SASKATCHEWAN
REGIONAL SETTING 1

facility and activity siting from an environmental point-of-view. The 12 categories - ranging from back-packing to hard surface roads - for which suitability and impact maps were generated are listed in Table 1.

Consequently, when a recommendation is made in the Conceptual Planning document to either close an existing facility or to open a new facility - such as the recommended closing of the Battle Creek Road - it is based on an analysis approach which considers over 100 variables ranging from slopes to wildlife habitat considerations. Such a comprehensive evaluation could only have been accomplished using computer-assisted techniques. Referring again to the Battle Creek Road, for illustrative purposes, it cuts through one of the most valuable ecological areas of the Park (Class 2, out of 7 classes); from an engineering suitability viewpoint it is rated as highly unsuitable; from an environmental impact viewpoint it rates as having a high impact. As a result, if the ecological character of this special area (and the Park) is to be preserved, the Battle Creek Road should be closed and converted to a hiking trail. Throughout the planning discussion the supporting documents should be referred to as they form the foundation for the Conceptual Plan.

The changes and new emphases proposed for Cypress Hills Provincial Park, although extensive, are not revolutionary. Most major parks in North America recognize the primacy of single land-use and have completely eliminated the multiple land-use conflict in favor of recreation. This trend is reflected in the recent Position Paper issued by the Minister of Lands and Forests, "Provincial Parks Policy for Alberta, May, 1973." In this Paper some of the established - and long standing - activities associated with Provincial Parks, such as Cypress Hills, are viewed as conflicts in new parks; these include: townsites, rodeos, private cottages, and resource development (such as grazing) where it is in substantial conflict with the outdoor recreation experience. The emerging emphasis in Alberta thus focuses on (1) park development based on the natural and historical attributes of the site, (2) passive recreation, and (3) the interpretive function. (See Appendix 1 for a detailed outline of the issues and policy responses developed to guide the Conceptual Plan.)

In addition to the problem of nonconforming activities, a significant threat to the quality of the Cypress Hills Park environment is posed by the present loosely controlled use of the automobile. This problem manifests itself in various ways: (1) much of the disturbance and damage in campgrounds, picnic areas, and the Park landscape in general, such as alongside Reesor Lake, is caused by the practice of allowing vehicles to drive willy nilly through the Park, and (2) the numerous uncontrolled entrance roads cause the Park to be used as a throughway for traffic unrelated to Park use. The need for better use-definition in general is discussed in the Recreation Facilities Section - Volume 1; the phasing out of all but the recommended Park entrance (and service) roads is incorporated into the Conceptual Plan phasing schedule (Table 3).

The Conceptual Plan thus addresses itself not only to the experiential imperative of creating a strong Park image but also to the resolution of land-use and environmental impact conflicts to enable the Cypress Hills Provincial Park to realize its full potential. In effecting these objectives every attempt was made to minimize the real hardship imposed on vested interests; interests which were appropriate at their inception but which now represent nonconforming activities in terms of recreation requirements of the present and the future.

The years 1974 to 1984 are critical for the Cypress Hills Park with regards to establishing the type of Park which will protect for the future a significant natural and historical heritage.

The Park

"The Cypress Mountains formed indeed a great contrast to the level country through which we have been travelling; they are covered with timber, much of which is

very valuable for building purposes, the soil is rich, and the supply of water abundant. These hills are a perfect oasis in the desert we have travelled . . . "
Palliser, 1859.

Cypress Hills is a special place. This isolated plateau - 85 miles in length, 25 miles in width, and rising over 1,000 feet above the surrounding plains - is especially rich in geological, biological, visual, and historical interest as characterized below:

Resource	Description
Geological	Situated on the drainage divide between the South Saskatchewan and Missouri River Systems, this landscape remnant has been sculptured by the processes of glaciation and erosion to create a plateau landform rising prominently amidst the Great Plains.
Biological	The plateau's topographic prominence in the middle of the short grass prairie landscape has produced a distinct climate and, consequently, a vegetation and wildlife similar to the Rocky Mountains 150 miles to the west.
Visual	As articulated by Palliser, the Cypress Hills "oasis" creates a strong visual impression in the contrast between the heavily forested slopes and the surrounding prairie grasslands. The hills also offer impressive vistas of the surrounding landscape; included within the viewshed of the plateau are the Sweetgrass Hills and the Bearpaw Mountains.
Historical	The events and artifacts associated with the Cypress Hills illuminate much of the saga of the Old Canadian West: Indian times, the pre-European "buffalo" landscape, the fur trade, the R.C.M.P., the open range era, and the Canadian Conservation Movement.

These valuable recreational and historical resources which, if effectively utilized, could illuminate significant aspects of the heritage of Western Canada are little used at present. Although Alberta's Cypress Hills Provincial Park was established in 1951, the area has a long tradition of multiple resource use. As a result, the Park today functions primarily as (1) a small regional park focusing on Elkwater Lake and catering to the weekend visitors from Medicine Hat and the nearby region, and (2) a grazing reserve for local ranchers. Both these emphases have led to underutilization of the Park's full range of recreational resources, which approach National Park caliber.

activity zones

Recreational planning must reconcile the issue of use vs. preservation, that is, of allowing visitors to use and enjoy a park while at the same time ensuring that the special character of the park is retained. Integral then to defining the Activity Zones of the Cypress Hills Park was the analysis of the ecological zones (watershed units) of the Park. These were evaluated on the basis of diversity, ecological uniqueness, and undisturbed character. The ecological zones are delineated on Map 2 and their ecological value rating indicated. The ecological zones thus constituted one of the primary criteria in establishing the Activity Zones within the Park; those ecological zones of high value were treated as potential conservation areas; where ecological zones were grouped together, the grouping included zones of compatible rating. Further, the convenient siting of most existing roads along watershed divides automatically placed them on the periphery of the Activity Zones.

The second important criteria is establishing the Activity Zones focused on their interpretive value. There is so much "low key" variety in the Cypress Hills that, in the absence of clearly defined interpretive images and areas to relate to, the visitor today suffers from an ill defined and often vague recreational experience. One of the central concerns, then, is to bring the Park's interpretive and recreational possibilities into sharp focus and to relate these possibilities to the landscape. The Activity Zones thus reflect the desire to create a strong sense-of-place for various portions of the Park as suggested by their indigenous resources, while at the same time respecting the ecological zones.

In addition, there are some broader concerns which underlie the development of the Activity Zones. Traditionally, three consistent themes have pervaded park policy: nature preservation, historic preservation, and outdoor recreation. Today, two new themes are taking shape reflecting deep-seated national concerns: (1) the need to preserve the total cultural heritage of a nation, in all its diversity, and (2) the need to gain a better understanding of man's role in the ecosystem, and to shape his activities in recognition of ecological constraints.

Each of the Activity Zones offers myriad opportunities to illuminate ecological principles; these are best delineated as part of the detailed design of interpretive facilities and programs. The implications of the Cypress Hills in terms of the Canadian experience, however, have only recently begun to be generally appreciated, as in Nelson's The Last Refuge, and are stressed in description here to ensure the fullest appreciation of the Cypress Hills Park's potential. (A detailed discussion of the historical and cultural significance of the Cypress Hills landscape appears in the History Section - Volume 1.) The Activity Zones are also delineated on Map 2 and are characterized below.

ACTIVITY ZONES and ECOLOGICAL ZONING 2

● Elkwater Lake Zone

This area is presently the prime recreational use area of the Park as well as its major eye sore. One of the finest areas of the Park in terms of physical, biological, and recreation attr butes (Photo 1), it is also the focus of low quality and gaudy cottages, pr ane tanks, power poles, over-developed and over-crowded picnic and campground facilities, and chaotic architectural and signage design as well as general clutter.

Although presently substandard in terms of the quality desired for an interpretive and service centre for a provincial park, the infrastructure necessary to support such a function is available here. Consequently, redesign of this area would be the most economical way to create a suitable support area for the remainder of the Park as well as providing many facilities appropriate for the active recreation demands within the Park. (In this regard, the recommended land acquisition of the E/2, Section 30, T8, R2W4 would secure the most prospective nearby acreage for future campground development - Photo 2.)

Photo 1. View of Elkwater Lake from Ferguson Hill Road, Elkwater Lake Zone.

Photo 2. Recommended land acquisition for future campground development, Elkwater Lake Zone.

Vista Point Zone

In many respects this is the most dramatic area of the Park. View points here provide visitors with a strong sense of the plateau landform (Photo 3), the peripheral valleys of glacial origin, the interfingering of the grassland and forest vegetation, and the surrounding Great Plains (Photo 4). This clear imageability of the character of the Hills is further reinforced by the tree-capped Medicine Lodge Ridge several miles to the southwest which is virtually a Cypress Hills in miniature. In addition, because the viewshed from the western tip of the plateau includes the Sweetgrass Hills visible 65 miles to the southwest (Photo 6), a symbolic visual link is established with the pre-European "buffalo" landscape as implied by their name. This ancient landscape which once swarmed with animal life now lives only in the journals of the earlier travellers, but none the less remains a significant part of Canada's heritage:

> "Thousands and thousands of buffalo . . . the roaring of these animals resembles the grunting of hogs, with a roaring sound from the throat . . . the roaring could be heard for miles."
>
> Audubon, 1843.

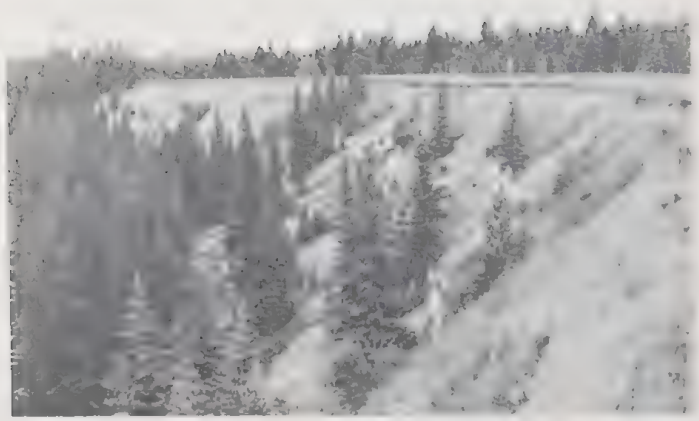


Photo 3. Plateau escarpment at Horseshoe Canyon viewpoint, Vista Point Zone.

Photo 4. View of surrounding Great Plains from plateau rim, Vista Point Zone.

Cypress Ranch Zone

The stark setting of the plateau provides the archetypical expression of the prairie environment in close association to the more amenable forests and lakes, or "oasis" of Palliser. The ambivalent attitudes towards the prairies are illuminated here - the subtle beauty of the wildflowers and prairie grasses, the expansive vistas, and at the same time, the harsh image of Palliser's "triangle."

Focused here too is the central problem of multiple resource use within the Park: recreation vs. grazing. For Alberta's Cypress Hills Park to realize its full potential, grazing should be removed from the Park's prime ecological support areas and prime recreational areas and, further, placed in a context compatible with a park experience. Because ranching is a legitimate part of the history of the Hills, an open range (era) emphasis can be appropriately developed in the central plateau grassland (Map 2) to create an experiential setting reminiscent of the Old Canadian West and meaningful to the urban visitor (Photos 5 and 6).

Photo 5. Ranching (era) setting, Cypress Ranch Zone.

Photo 6. View of Sweetgrass Hills from sawmill, Cypress Ranch Zone.

Spruce Coulee Zone

Based on criteria stressing diversity, ecological uniqueness, and undisturbed character the Spruce Coulee watershed rates as the only Class 1 Ecological Zone within the Park and is consequently of singular ecological value to the Park (Photos 7 and 8). It thus becomes the prime focus for conservation management within the Park. Accordingly the long tradition of resource exploitation and conservation concern which has focused on the Cypress Hills - such that this landscape now embodies and symbolizes the essential elements of the Canadian Conservation Movement - provides dramatic interpretive possiblities best illuminated in association with this special ecological area.

Two additional criteria reinforced this emphasis for Spruce Coulee: (1) the parity consideration of allocating one of the Park's water bodies to active recreation (Elkwater Lake), one to passive recreation (Reesor Lake), and one to conservation (Spruce Coulee), and (2) the desire to re-establish the rare trumpeter swans within the Alberta Hills, with the Spruce Coulee reservoir being the most accommodating habitat for this.

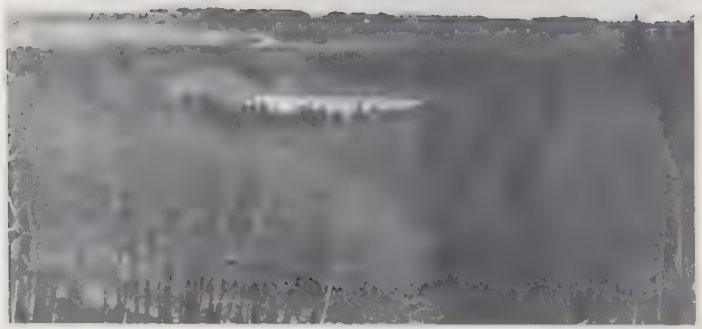


Photo 7. View of Spruce Coulee Reservoir from plateau rim, Spruce Coulee Zone.

Photo 8. Redwinged blackbird in cattail marsh, Spruce Coulee Zone.

Battle Creek Zone

Whereas the Vista Point Zone provides a strong sense of the Cypress Hills relative to the surrounding prairies, the Battle Creek Zone highlights many of the distinctive geological, biological, and visual features within the Park.

Reesor Lake Viewpoint provides an overview of these features (Photo 9). Geologically, the valley itself is dramatic evidence of the sculpturing power of the Pleistocene glaciers; the grass-covered hills to the north are separated from the forested plateau proper to the south by an ancient channel carved by water which flowed from the melting glacier. Biologically, the grass-covered south-facing hills and the forested north-facing plateau escarpment illustrate the characteristic affects of microclimates with the relatively snow-free south-facing slopes creating the most valuable wintering area in the Park for elk, moose, and deer. The visual quality is also high, with many features of interest; the plateau/escarpment and forest/grassland transition's in combination with the axial element of the valley "floor" and the sense of enclosure of its "walls" creates an exciting visual environment as well as providing one of the most attractive settings within the Park for a walking-hiking-camping experience (Photo 10).

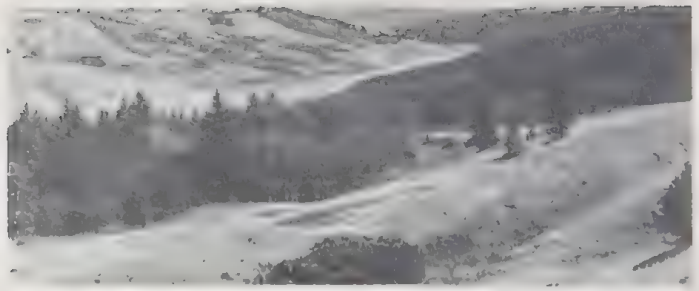


Photo 9. [illegible] Reesor Lake from plateau rim, Battle Creek Zone.

Photo 10. Battle Creek, Battle Creek Zone.

Storm Creek Zone

The name of this area, although derived from Storm Creek, (Photos 11 and 12), speaks metaphorically for the international historical significance of the Cypress Hills. Encompassed within the viewshed from the south side of the plateau are the Bearpaw Mountains visible 100 miles to the south across the Medicine Line; they provide a symbolic visual link illuminating the role of the Cypress Hills within the context of the Indian history of the West. As stressed in recent books - which are thrusting the Cypress Hills into the National consciousness:

> ". . . the Cypress Hills . . . served as the end point or last refuge of a people, a way of life, and a landscape too soon forgotten. The life of the free plains Indian, the bison on which he was so heavily dependent, and the landscape and ecosystem of which he was a part, ended in the Cypress Hills country after a long retreat across the northern plains of North America."
>
> Nelson, The Last Refuge, 1973.

Although Sitting Bull's well known refuge focused on Fort Walsh and the Wood Mountain area further east, the retreat of Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce Indians as they sought sanctuary across the Medicine Line in Canada ended in the Bearpaws. These distant peaks thus provide a strong symbolic image relative to the Indian history of the West.

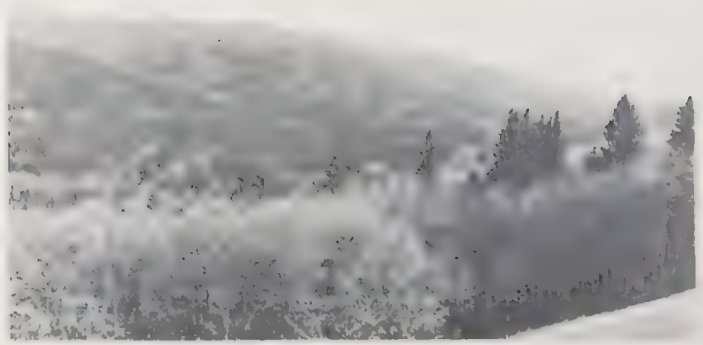


Photo 11. Characteristic view of upper watershed area in Park, Storm Creek Zone.

Photo 12. Potential primitive campsite, Storm Creek Zone.

activities / facilities

As discussed, Alberta's Cypress Hills Park possesses a broad range of experience possibilities ranging from the pleasures of angling to a sophisticated appreciation of symbolic historical values of the landscape. Just as the Park's resource base potentially provides wide appeal, it also provides siting possibilities ranging from fully serviced campgrounds with social opportunities for the more urban-oriented visitors to primitive areas where visitors can backpack and escape from the sights and sounds of urbanization. However, recreational activities and facilities must be judiciously related to the Activity Zones to ensure the appropriate level of protection for the Park's resources. Accordingly, basic to the design and siting of activities and facilities was an evaluation of possible levels of use relative to the natural resilience of the Park. That is, the capability of the Park ecosystem to support sustained recreational use was appraised; this capability was evaluated by means of (1) a field survey focusing on selected criteria emphasizing climate, vegetation, topography, and soils (Inventory Document), and (2) a sophisticated computer-assisted suitability and impact analysis utilizing the complete resource data base (Analysis Document).

The levels of use can be generally characterized as follows:

Level of Use	Activity Emphasis
Limited	Conservation
Moderate	Passive Recreation
Intensive	Active Recreation

- Conservation

Certain resources within the Park are of singular value; their state of health is essential in retaining the special character of the Park. Such resources can range from the Class 1 ecological zone of Spruce Coulee to "key" habitat areas for unique wildlife; in addition, they can have intangible significance such as historical meaning. Recreational use of such areas should be considered a privilege and allowed on a controlled basis. The essential "equipment" involved should include both the visitors mind and body, open to enjoying and appreciating the "benchmark" values of the Park.

- Passive Recreation (non-facilities oriented recreation)

Passive recreation encompasses those activities of relatively moderate environmental impact due to their dispersed or non-concentrated nature. Passive recreation usually involves (1) lightweight, portable equipment, such as a canoe, or (2) accessory equipment related to but not essential to an activity, such as tents. Examples of passive recreation activities contemplated for the Park include:

Swimming	Nature Studies/ Photography
Wading	Backpacking
Fishing (bank/boat)	Day Camping
Boating (canoe/kayak)	Enjoying the View
Boat Launch/Recovery	Cross-Country Skiing
Picnicking	Snow Shoeing
Hiking	Horseback Riding (minor)
Bicycling (minor)	Minor Support Facilities (shelters)
	Parking (view points)

Active Recreation (facilities oriented recreation)

Active recreation encompasses those activities of relatively high environmental impact due to their concentrated and intensive nature (or frequency). Active recreation usually involves either (1) a reliance on major facilities, such as power boats, or (2) a concentration of users in a limited area. Examples of active recreation activities contemplated for the Park include:

- Boating (power)
- Boat Launching/Parking
- Swimming/Wading (concentrated)
- Fishing (concentrated)
- Water Skiing
- Auto Camping (trailer/camper/tent)
- Walk-in Tent Camping
- Group Camping
- Picnicking (concentrated)
- Bicycling (concentrated)
- Horseback Riding (concentrated)
- Trail Heads/Parking, Unloading
- Downhill Skiing
- Auto Parking
- Major Support Facilities (service)

The use level and activities considered essential for each Activity Zone are summarized in Table 2.

Siting - Activity Zones

In addition to the recommended use level and activities summarized in Table 2, the facilities considered essential to the concept are also summarized. The siting of the major facilities throughout the Park is depicted on Map 3, the Conceptual Plan map; the minor supporting facilities focus around the various Activity Nodes and are discussed below.

Siting - Activity Nodes

The Activity Nodes fulfill the orientation function within each Activity Zone. For the Vista Point, Spruce Coulee, Battle Creek, and Storm Creek Zones the facilities envisioned are informal requiring only an open interpretive shelter, sympathetically sited. The Cypress Ranch Activity Node, however, capitalizes on existing structures, such as the sawmill, and with modest additions can effectively recapture the era; a conceptualization of this is presented on Maps 4 and 5.

The proposed townsite redevelopment is detailed on Map 6. Various aspects of the townsite redevelopment are discussed under the following headings:

- Circulation
  - Entranceway
  - Elkwater-Plateau Loop
- Implementation
  - Townsite Objectives
  - Phasing Schedule (Table 3)
  - Facility Densities (Table 4)
- Townsite Issues and Policy Response Guidelines (Appendix 1)

Circulation - Park

The general objective related to roads is that they should flank and not broach the various Activity Zones within the Park. The resulting destinational configuration of the recommended road system, for the most part, clearly conforms to this objective. Three circulation requirements, however, warrant discussion: the entranceway, the loop connecting Elkwater with the plateau, and the connection to Fort Walsh, the Battle Creek Road.

TABLE 2

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES AND FACILITIES

Activity Zones	Appropriate Use Level	Activities	Facilities
[illegible]	■ ●	Boating (power), boat launch/recovery, wading (concentrated, fishing (concentrated), water skiing, auto camping, picnicking (concentrated), downhill skiing, auto parking, nature studies/ photography, enjoying the view.	[illegible] loop trails, ½ day loop trails, marina, beach complex, ski hill, semi-fully serviced campgrounds, semi-serviced picnic areas; connector trails.
[illegible] Point	■	Picnicking, hiking, nature studies/photography, day camping, enjoying the view.	[illegible] facility, 1-2 hour loop trail, ½ day loop trail, view points; connector trails.
[illegible] Ranch	■	Picnicking, hiking, nature studies/photography, day camping, horseback riding (minor).	Interpretive facility, 1-2 hour loop trail, one day horseback trail.
Spruce Coulee (Conservation Area)	✕ ■	Picnicking, hiking, nature studies/photography, day camping, enjoying the view.	Interpretive facility, 1-2 hour loop trail, ½ day loop trail, view points; connector trail.
Battle Creek (Primitive Area)	✕ ■	Fishing (bank/boat), boating (canoe/kayak), boat launch/recovery, picnicking, hiking, nature studies/photography, backpacking, day camping, enjoying the view, parking (view points).	Interpretive facility, 1-2 hour loop trail, ½ day loop trail, view points.
Storm Creek (Wilderness Area)	✕ ■	Picnicking, hiking, nature studies/photography, backpacking, day camping, enjoying the view.	Interpretive display, [illegible] day loop trail, view points.

TABLE 2. Continued

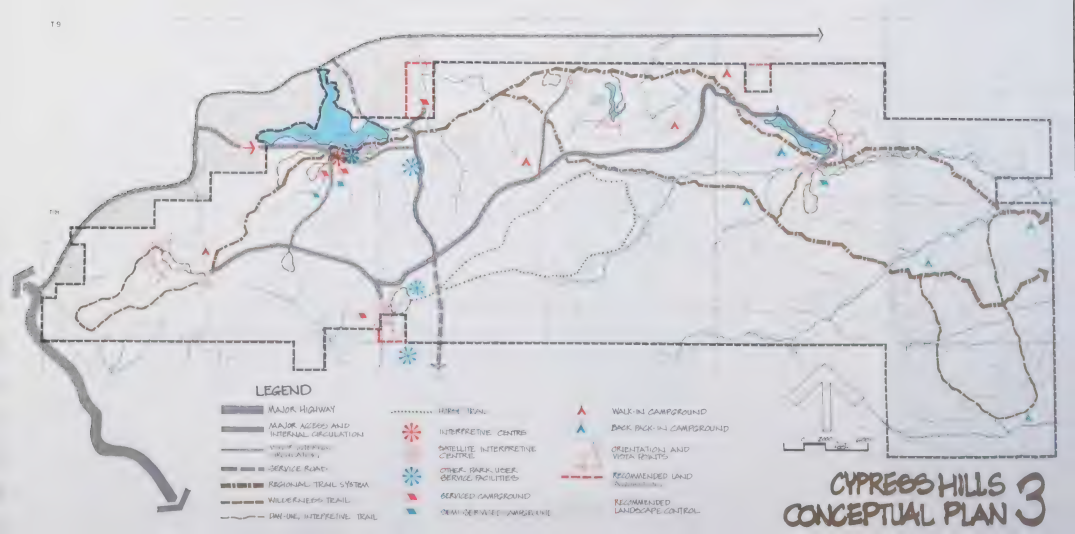
Activity Zone	Appropriate Use Level	Activities	Facilities
Roadway Environs	■ ●	Walk-in tent camping*, picnicking, hiking, bicycling (minor), day camping, enjoying the view, parking (view points).	Turnouts, view points.

Walk-in tent camping consists of low-density, semi-primitive camping within 1/4 to 1/2 mile of a parking area facilitating the ready transport of tent, food, etc. to the campsite.

✖ CONSERVATION - Limited Use

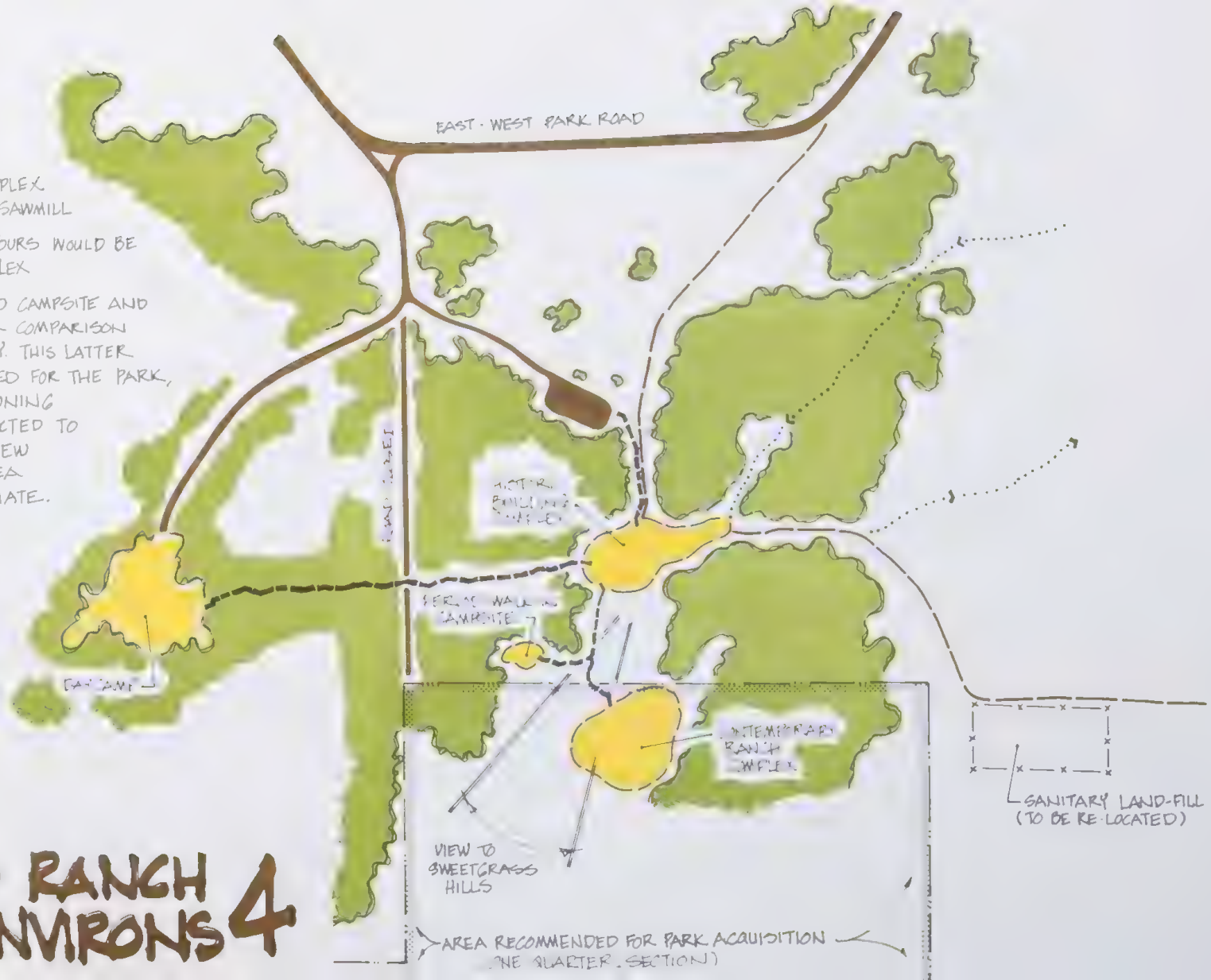
■ PASSIVE RECREATION - Moderate Use

● ACTIVE RECREATION - Intensive Use


LEGEND
MAJOR HIGHWAY
MAJOR ACCESS AND INTERNAL CIRCULATION
VISITOR CIRCULATION (RECREATION)
SERVICE ROAD
REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM
WILDERNESS TRAIL
DAY-USE, INTERPRETIVE TRAIL
HORSE TRAIL
INTERPRETIVE CENTRE
SATELLITE INTERPRETIVE CENTRE
OTHER PARK USER SERVICE FACILITIES
SERVICED CAMPGROUND
OMNI-SERVICED CAMPGROUND
WALK-IN CAMPGROUND
BACK PACK-IN CAMPGROUND
ORIENTATION AND VISTA SITES
RECOMMENDED LAND ACQUISITION
RECOMMENDED LANDSCAPE CONTROL
CYPRESS HILLS 3
CONCEPTUAL PLAN

CYPRESS RANCH

- HISTORIC PERIOD BUILDING COMPLEX OF 1880's RANCH & LATER SAWMILL
- LIMITED GUIDED HORSEBACK TOURS WOULD BE AVAILABLE FROM THE COMPLEX
- NEARBY WALK-IN TO A PERIOD CAMPSITE AND CONTEMPORARY RANCH FOR COMPARISON WITH THE HISTORIC FACILITY. THIS LATTER AREA SHOULD BE ACQUIRED FOR THE PARK, OR AT THE VERY LEAST, ZONING CONTROLS SHOULD BE ENACTED TO PRESERVE THE CRITICAL VIEW A DAY-CAMP IN THIS AREA WOULD ALSO BE APPROPRIATE.


EAST - WEST PARK ROAD
HISTORIC BUILDINGS COMPLEX
TEMPORARY RANCH COMPLEX
SANITARY LAND-FILL (TO BE RE-LOCATED)
VIEW TO SWEETGRASS HILLS
AREA RECOMMENDED FOR PARK ACQUISITION (ONE QUARTER SECTION)

LEGEND

- PARK BOUNDARY
- ACCESS ROAD
- SERVICE ROAD
- FOOTPATH
- HORSE TRAILS

SCALE FEET 300 600 1500

CYPRESS RANCH ENVIRONS 4

1880's PERIOD RANCH

LOG CABINS, SHEDS & STABLE WITH HORSES, HUMANS, PIGS, CHICKENS, SHEEP & MOBILE OUTHOUSE. HAY MANURE PILE. SMALL KITCHEN GARDEN.

GUIDES - HISTORY AND ANTHROPOLOGY STUDENTS EMPLOYED FOR SUMMER — TO DRESS IN PERIOD COSTUMES AND DEMONSTRATE REPLICATED PERIOD EQUIPMENT AND TECHNIQUES.

HOUSE TO BE RESTORED TO PERIOD STYLE OR REPLACED AND USED AS INTERPRETIVE CENTRE AND GUIDE OFFICE.

GUIDED HORSEBACK TOURS TO BE AVAILABLE.

HOUSE INTERPRETIVE CENTRE AND GUIDE OFFICE

HISTORICAL ARMS AND SHEDS

STABLE AND CORRAL

SAW SHED

LUMBER SHED

GARDEN

MANURE PILE

PASTURE

PERIOD SAWMILL

NOT FOR FULL SCALE ACTUAL OPERATION BUT TO BE REACTIVATED FOR DEMONSTRATIONS AND INTERPRETIVE TALKS.

NEIGHBORING RANCH

TO BE PURCHASED AND POSSIBLY RENTED BACK TO RANCHER TO BE OPERATED AS CONTEMPORARY RANCH WITH GUIDED INTERPRETIVE TOURS

PERIOD STYLE WALK IN CAMPSITE

1880's PERIOD CAMPSITE

PERIOD STYLE CAMPSITE, REPLICATED TENTS AND EQUIPMENT TO BE AVAILABLE FOR RENT BY WALK IN CAMPERS. INFORMAL INTERPRETIVE TALKS BY GUIDES

CYPRESS RANCH
CONCEPTUAL SITE PLAN 5

NOT-TO-SCALE

ELKWATER LAKE
LEGEND
CAMPING
TRAILS
VISITOR SERVICE
VISITOR USE
PARK SERVICE
HOUSING
VEHICLE ACCESS
PARKING
RECREATIONAL
ELKWATER CONCEPTUAL PLAN 6

Entranceway

It must be recognized that in a few years the main north-south highway in this area will be Highway 941, which skirts the southwest corner of the Park (Map 3), and not Highway 48. The present entrance road across the causeway provides a substandard visual entrance experience through the townsite as well as being rated in the Analysis as highly unsuitable from an engineering suitability viewpoint and as having a high impact from an environmental impact viewpoint; accordingly it should be phased out.

With Highway 941 as the major highway, Jackpot Road becomes the scenic link to the Elkwater Lake area. Referring to the earlier stated need to bring the Park's interpretive and recreational possibilities into sharp focus, and to avoid the substandard townsite transit experience, the entrance road would ideally make the Park's interpretive centre the first aspect of the visitor's experience. This is accomplished by the recommended new entrance road entering the Park from the west end of Elkwater Lake which arrives at the interpretive centre first and also eliminates the present low quality entrance experience problem. With the phasing out of the causeway road, a service link behind the maintenance complex to Highway 48 would accommodate that function.

Elkwater-Plateau Loop

As illustrated by the slumping along Highway 48 and the steep grades along the Ferguson Hill Road, virtually any road from Elkwater up to the plateau will be rated as unsuitable from both an engineering suitability and environmental impact point-of-view. Nonetheless, a road loop is required to integrate the upper and lower Park levels to facilitate the development of one-way traffic. The two paved roads, 48 and Ferguson Hill, logically form this loop. The present unpaved scenic drive along Mitchell Ridge should be closed and converted to a hiking trail connecting the Elkwater Lake and Vista Point Zones. (The trailer drop sites detailed on Map 6 facilitate eliminating trailer traffic - except registered trailers using the Reesor Lake Campground - from the bulk of the Park.) With the upgrading of Highway 941, Highway 48 should be terminated to public use atop the plateau so as not to infringe upon the grazing area. It could still function as a north-south service road, however, for the grazing operation in the Cypress Ranch Activity Zone.

Battle Creek Road

As stated earlier the Battle Creek Road should be closed. In effecting the essential link to Fort Walsh for interpretive purposes, the Graburn Creek Road is equally unsuitable. These corridors rate as highly unsuitable from both the point-of-view of engineering suitability as well as environmental impact; in addition they breach the Battle Creek Activity Zone, severely degrading its viability as a legitimate primitive area where visitors should be able to escape from the sights and sounds of urbanization as implied in the classic definition of wilderness.

> ". . . a continuous stretch of country preserved in its natural state . . . big enough to absorb a . . . pack trip, and kept devoid of roads, artificial trails, cottages, or other works of man."
>
> Leopold, 1921.

The recommended link, passing north of the Park boundary from Highway 48 to Fort Walsh, preserves the integrity of this special part of the Park.

In reality any roadway to Fort Walsh passing through the Park itself would create a problem, that is, of a "Trans Canada Scenic Loop" cutting through the heart of Alberta's Cypress Hills Park and creating unreasonable automobile-oriented expectations and demands similar to the problem of the Trans-Canada Highway bisecting Banff National Park. Thus the sat-

ellite road link approach not only protects the Park's resource base but allows for a scenic connection between the Alberta and Saskatchewan portions of the Cypress Hills plateau.

- Firebreaks/Airstrip

With the dispersion of recreational activities and facilities throughout the Park, the firebreaks previously developed to "fireproof" the forests become a negative landscape feature. In addition, the rim of the plateau is also the prime potential archaeological "corridor" within the Park and disruption of the land surface here has and will destroy potentially valuable archaeological sites. In any event, the advent of water bombers has provided a means of fire control more appropriate to a park setting. Thus creation or perpetuation of these firebreaks should be discontinued and the areas involved allowed to rehabilitate themselves.

The function of the airstrip thus becomes an adjunct of the fire control program (as well as emergency use); it should remain as a service facility.

implementation

General

Implementation will necessarily be achieved through phasing. In addition to the time element involved there are four basic phasing categories to be dealt with: grazing, townsite, Highway 941, and recreational infrastructure; these are characterized below:

Phasing Category	Objective
Grazing	Five year phasing period, 1974-1979, designed (1) to remove grazing from the Park's prime ecological support areas and prime recreational areas, and (2) to place it in a context compatible with the Park experience.
Townsite	Ten year phasing period, 1974-1984, keyed to expiration of all cottage leases; designed to convert Elkwater from a "subsidized" residential community catering to relatively few residents from the local area to a small residential/maintenance complex providing accommodation for Park employees. The released open space would be suitable for augmenting the serviced campground facilities of the Park in an area of high suitability for such facilities as well as availability of the necessary service infrastructure.
New Access Highway (Highway 941)	Phasing keyed to upgrading of Highway 941 to primary north-south link with U.S. replacing Highway 48. The opportunity presented provides for the logical creation of a high quality Park entranceway replacing the present substandard entranceway off Highway 48.
Recreational Infrastructure	Twelve year phasing period, 1974-1986; designed to implement the overall Conceptual Plan. Strongly influenced in certain areas by grazing, townsite, and Highway 941 phasing considerations.

Phasing Schedule

More specific recommendations related to the phasing process are presented in Tables 3 and 4. As with any Conceptual Plan, the phasing recommendations are guidelines intended to direct the implementation actions such that parks management can control the desired direction of future Park development and still maintain a large degree of flexibility. Because of the numerous phasing alternatives possible, the cost guidelines have been broken down on a unit basis to facilitate costing various alternatives; these are summarized in Table 5.

TABLE 3 - PHASING SCHEDULE

PHASING CATEGORIES / YEAR	GRAZING	TOWNSITE
① 1974	Notify grazing permit holders and grazing associations of intended plans.	Nonrenewal of cottage leases .....
② 1975	Adjust grazing in the Park to the true carrying capacity (i.e., curtail over-grazing).	Upgrade service centre facilities (gas station, store, etc.) on temporary basis.
③ 1976	Grazing reduction	
④ 1977		Redevelop Service Centre facilities (gas station, store, etc.) along new loop road off Highway 48.
⑤ 1978	Construct fences around grazing area specified in Conceptual Plan ; construct dugouts for watering. Restructure grazing association arrangement.	
⑥ 1979	Restrict grazing to area specified in Conceptual Plan. Remove old fences.	
⑦ 1980		
⑧ 1981		
⑨ 1982		
⑩ 1983		
⑪ 1984		

TABLE 3 - Continued

PHASING CATEGORIES / YEAR	HIGHWAY 941 (ASSUMED COMPLETION DATE 1976)	RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE (A) ACTIVITY AREAS
① 1974	Detailed planning for new entranceway off Jackpot Road.	Develop interpretive program(s) for new Park emphasis and Activity Zones.....
② 1975	Acquire right-of-way for new entranceway.	Detailed planning of facilities for Activity Zones ..... Upgrade main Interpretive Center.
③ 1976	Construct new entranceway; restrict causeway to park service vehicles.	Construct Spruce Coulee facilities.
④ 1977	Construct new loop road off Highway 48; remove causeway.	Construct Vista Point facilities. Open Spruce Coulee Activity Zone.
⑤ 1978		Construct Cypress Ranch facilities. Open Vista Point Activity Zone.
⑥ 1979		Construct Battle Creek Facilities. Open Cypress Ranch Activity Zone.
⑦ 1980		Open Battle Creek Activity Zone.
⑧ 1981		
⑨ 1982		
⑩ 1983		
⑪ 1984		

TABLE 3 - Continued

PHASING CATEGORIES / YEAR	RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE (B) ROADS AND TRAILS	(C) CAMPGROUNDS AND PICNIC AREAS
① 1974	Close Battle Creek Road; re-route Fort Walsh traffic via Graburn Creek Road. Detailed planning for new Fort Walsh link north of Park Boundary.	Close Reesor Lake (side) Picnic Area and lakeside roadway.
② 1975	Acquire right-of-way for new Fort Walsh Road. Close lower Spruce Coulee Road and Campground. Upgrade Beaver Creek Trail and Elkwater/Spruce Coulee Trail.	Redevelop Ferguson Hill Campground subsuming Ferguson Hill Picnic Area. Detailed planning for walk-in campsites off roadway and primitive-area campsites. Implement control measures for Marina-B and Elkwater Lake (west) Picnic Areas.
③ 1976	Construct new Fort Walsh Road. Close Spruce Coulee Park access road.	Redevelop Elkwater Campground. Close Nichol Spring Campground. Establish walk-in campsites ..... Redevelop Park "overflow" camping area.
④ 1977	Close Murray Hill Road. Establish Ferguson Hill - Highway 48 as lower/upper Park loop.	Redevelop Beaver Creek Campground subsuming Girl Guide Camp.
⑤ 1978	Close Mitchell Ridge Road; manage as hiking trail. Close Graburn Creek Road and plateau roads.	Redevelop Lodge Pole Campground. Close Graburn Campground and Picnic Area and Battle Creek Campground. Establish primitive-area campsites ....
⑥ 1979	Restrict south leg of Highway 48 to service vehicles for grazing area. Close all minor access roads not integral to Park use.	Redevelop Reesor Lake Campground.
⑦ 1980		Redevelop Church Camp Area to group camp.
⑧ 1981		
⑨ 1982		
⑩ 1983		
⑪ 1984		Construct new campground in released townsite open space. Redevelop beach and marina support area.

TABLE 3 - Continued

PHASING CATEGORIES / YEAR	RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE (D) MANAGEMENT	OTHER (LAND ACQUISITION AND LANDSCAPE CONTROL)
① 1974	Develop and implement architectural, landscape and recreational * control standards. Notify all private camp .. permit holders (Girl Guides, Church Camps, etc.) of termination plans. * See Table 4, this volume.	
② 1975	Terminate all private camp permits; manage as public group camps.	Acquire E/2, Section 30, T8, R2W4 for future campground area. Acquire NE/4, Section 30, T8, R1W4. Acquire SW/4, Section 6, T8, R2W4. Implement landscape control measures along Jackpot Road and new Fort Walsh Road.
③ 1976		Use acquired land (Section 30) for overflow camping.....
④ 1977		
⑤ 1978	Manage Battle Creek Activity Zone as primitive area and Storm Creek Activity Zone as wilderness area.	
⑥ 1979	Assess feasibility of public transportation to Fort Walsh..... (on-going assessment until implemented)	
⑦ 1980	Assess feasibility of public transportation in Park..... (on-going assessment until implemented)	Detailed planning for new campgrounds on acquired land.
⑧ 1981	Assess upper limit of Park carrying capacity; develop visitor control measures.....(on-going assessment until implemented)	Construct new campgrounds on acquired land.
⑨ 1982		
⑩ 1983		
⑪ 1984	Final upgrading of "new" townsite.	

TABLE 4

PROPOSED ACTIVITY/FACILITY DENSITIES

FACILITY		VISITOR DENSITY
CAMPGROUNDS		
Beaver Creek expanded	high	8 (units per acre)
Elkwater redeveloped	medium	6 (units per acre)
Reesor Lake redeveloped	medium	6 (units per acre)
Ferguson Hill expanded	low	4 (units per acre)
Lodge Pole redeveloped	low	4 (units per acre)
New:		
Released townsite open space	medium	6 (units per acre)
Released church camp open space	low	4 (units per acre)
Cypress Ranch	low	4 (units per acre)
Acquired land (Section 30)	low	4 (units per acre)
Walk-in (tent)	low	4 (parties per acre)
PICNIC AREAS/Day Camping		
Elkwater Lake (west)		10 (parties per acre)
Marina-B		10 (parties per acre)
"Overflow"		10 (parties per acre)
New:		
Activity Nodes		10 (parties per acre)
TRAILS		
1-2 hour Loop		90 (people per mile of trail per day)
½ day Loop		50 " "
Connector		40 " "
OTHER		
Water Skiing		1 boat/30 acres
Snow Skiing		25 skiers/slope acre

TABLE 5

CONSTRUCTION COST GUIDELINES

Campgrounds	
Fully Serviced	$2-3000/unit
Semiserviced	1000/unit
Roads	
Surfaced	40/lineal foot*
Unsurfaced	30/lineal foot
Parking	150/space/car
Buildings	
Structure	45/square foot
Power	
- above ground	7000/mile
- below ground	10/foot
Ski Area (trails, lifts, lodge)	1000-1400/skier

* Contracted cost

appendix

CYPRESS HILLS PROVINCIAL PARK

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDED POLICY RESPONSE GUIDELINES

I. ISSUES

A. MULTIPLE LAND USE OF PARK AREA (NON-PARK USE)

1. Grazing
2. Highways and transportation
3. Townsite

B. RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION

1. Users
2. Active recreation
3. Conservation and interpretation
4. Park experience

C. PARK STATUS IN THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

1. Interprovincial
2. Provincial
3. Regional

D. PARK BOUNDARIES

II. POLICY RESPONSE

● A. MULTIPLE LAND USE (NON-PARK USE)

▶ 1. Grazing

a. Considerations

i. high economic impact in region if grazing removed from park.

ii. indication of moderate to high environmental impact on portions of site.

iii. provides conflicts with park uses aesthetically and functionally.

b. Policy Statement

- grazing policy must be significantly changed to relieve conflicts.

- grazing must be greatly reduced and carefully managed to respect the primary park function (recreation)

- grazing management changes must be carefully phased and options provided to minimize negative regional economic impact.

▶ 2. Highways and Transportation

a. Considerations

- present access and through circulation patterns are based on external needs and convenience rather than park experience or control for protection of resources.

b. Policy Statement

i. through transportation routes should be reassessed and by-pass roads developed.

ii. greater control of access points.

iii. greater control of vehicle use within park.

▶ 3. Townsite

a. Considerations

i. considerable investment is involved in the townsite.

ii. the townsite zone is dominated by regional (Medicine Hat) users.

iii. water and electric service systems are inadequate for further expansion or present needs; the sewage system will accommodate the existing townsite; it is being under-utilized.

iv. present townsite image is substandard.

v. townsite does not maximize the park's potential of its immediate zone.

vi. numerous local traffic conflicts occur.

b. Policy Statement

i. townsite form must be modified and rehabilitated to achieve:

- improved visual image
- greater opportunities for all users
- reduce traffic conflicts
- accommodate permanent staff
- open up prime areas to public use
- accommodate high density visitor overnight requirements
- utility systems utilized as much as possible
- improve electrical and water supply systems to fit new town plan

ii. review lease policy regarding private cabins:

- allow no further leases
- non-renewal of all leases and purchase of structures desired for park personnel use
- convert private use facilities to public use

● B. RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

▶ 1. Users

a. Considerations

i. the greatest proportion of park users are from the immediate region - especially Medicine Hat; currently the park would be best classified as a regional facility.

ii. this provincial park is one of the largest and most diverse in the province and potentially has broad appeal.

b. Policy Statement

i. the park master plan must be broad enough to provide significant recreational opportunities for the benefit and enjoyment of all Albertans.

▶ 2. Active Recreation (intensive)

a. Considerations

i. the park presently supports a number of active recreational pursuits including water-oriented, skiing, camping, etc.

ii. the resource inventory indicates that adding more intensive recreational developments would not be in the best interest of the resource base due to carrying capacity and suitability considerations.

b. Policy Statement

i. active recreation has a place in Cypress Hills to meet the regional and provincial needs of the public.

ii. a balance must be struck between these uses and the carrying capacity of the park and a conservation and interpretive program.

iii. alternate sites adjacent to or in the general region should be studied and developed to offset pressure on the park.

iv. facilities must be relocated, reorganized, or removed from the park when in conflict with natural values and associated programs.

▶ 3. Conservation and Interpretation

a. Considerations

i. the park is suffering relatively high environmental impacts in specific high quality areas due to grazing practices and random, or over, developments.

ii. the park resource base is not being totally utilized for user interpretation and appreciation of scenic, cultural and bio-physical values.

b. Policy Statement

i. the park development concept must produce a greater, more sympathetic use of the park base with emphasis on natural, scenic, and cultural resources.

ii. areas of high ecological sensitivity or uniqueness must be zoned for conservation.

▶ 4. Park Experience

a. Considerations

i. the park in its present form doesn't offer the range of experience that it is capable of.

ii. visual experience in many of the developed areas is poor or inappropriate to park use.

b. Policy Statement

- the park master plan must recognize the full potential of Cypress Hills diverse resource base. Greater emphasis toward a more natural environment park should be undertaken.
- a sense of place must be developed reflecting natural, cultural, and scenic resources.
- these factors should be considered in proposals for entrances, circulation systems, facility location, and interpretive programs.

C. PARK STATUS IN THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

1. Interprovincial

a. Considerations

i. geographically the Cypress Hills region spreads through two provincial jurisdictions, Alberta and Saskatchewan.

ii. the two parks (Alberta and Saskatchewan) and historic site should be linked by a pathway and roadway that would serve as a recreational alternative to the Trans-Canada Highway.

iii. Cypress Hills Provincial Park has the scale and potential diversity of uses to be a destination park.

iv. the resource base analysis indicates that Alberta's Cypress Hills should be oriented toward a natural environment park.

b. Policy Statement

i. a through interprovincial parkway would not be appropriate within the Cypress Hills Provincial Park.

ii. a by-pass road system to a park standard connecting Ft. Walsh and other complementary park sites should be considered.

2. Provincial

a. Considerations

i. Cypress Hills has one of the largest land masses, extensive resource diversity, and high cultural and scenic values.

ii. the park has the potential to offer a wide range of recreational opportunities that would provide a significant experience for all Albertans.

b. Policy Statement

i. Cypress Hills Provincial Park should be so developed and managed to meet the needs of all Albertans in harmony with the land capability.

▶ 3. Regional

a. Considerations

i. the park is to a great extent serving as a regional park for Medicine Hat and environs. Alternatives must be explored for regional users including:

- cottage sites
- water oriented recreation
- long term camping
- "commercial" recreation

● D. PRESENT PARK BOUNDARIES

a. Considerations

i. Present boundaries do not respect ecological units such as watersheds and vegetation stands

ii. The park is liable to suffer from mismanagement of surrounding landscape.

iii. Adjacent visual resources are not presently protected from deleterious development.

b. Policy Statement

i. Adjacent resources should be either incorporated into the park or zoned to preclude certain kinds of future development.